

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name ELK HILL  
other names/site number DHR File #: 062-0005

**2. Location**

street & number 511 Rockfish Valley Highway not for publication N/A  
city or town Nellysford vicinity X  
state Virginia code VA county Nelson code 125 Zip 22958

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination     request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets     does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant     nationally     statewide X locally. (    See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Virginia Department of Historic Resources  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property     meets     does not meet the National Register criteria. (    See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby certify that this property is:

    entered in the National Register  
    See continuation sheet.

    determined eligible for the National Register  
    See continuation sheet.

    determined not eligible for the National Register

    removed from the National Register

    other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Keeper \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Classification****Ownership of Property** (Check as many boxes as apply)

☒ private  
☐ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

**Category of Property** (Check only one box)

☒ building(s)  
☐ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

**Number of Resources within Property**

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>8</u>	<u>4</u>	buildings
<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>12</u>	<u>4</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.) N/A**6. Function or Use****Historic Functions** (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Domestic	Sub: single dwelling- residence
Domestic	secondary building – smokehouse
Agriculture/Subsistence	storage - tobacco packing shed
Agriculture/Subsistence	secondary building – barn
Domestic	secondary structure –garage
Agriculture/Subsistence	animal facility - chicken house
Domestic	secondary structure – outhouse

**Current Functions** (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Domestic	Sub: Single dwelling
Domestic	secondary structure- storage
Agriculture/Subsistence	storage
Agriculture/Subsistence	barn – shelter for tractor and storage for farm equipment
Domestic	car garage
Agriculture/Subsistence	animal facility - chicken house - work in progress
Domestic	outhouse – empty
Domestic	single dwelling property
Agriculture/Subsistence	animal facility – feeding shed – empty

**7. Description****Architectural Classification** (Enter categories from instructions)

MIXED: Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century and 20<sup>th</sup> Century -- Neo- Classical Revival  
Mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century -- Greek Revival  
Early Republic -- Early Classical Revival  
Moderne

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Nelson County, VA**Materials** (Enter categories from instructions)Main dwelling:Foundation – brick, stone, woodWalls – brick, woodRoof - rolled tin, cedar shingles, asphalt shingles, tar paperOther – soapstone porch floor, stucco in front entrance pediment, chimneys are brick covered with plaster**Narrative Description** (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)**8. Statement of Significance****Applicable National Register Criteria** (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations** (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or a grave.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property.
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance** (Enter categories from instructions) Agriculture; Architecture**Period of Significance** 1749 to 1956**Significant Dates** 1749; 1774; 1805; 1825-1840; 1862; 1865; 1902; 1955**Significant Person** (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A**Cultural Affiliation** N/A**Architect/Builders -** Hawes Coleman and his descendants, Arthur T. Ewing, Edwin and Marian Kyle  
with Milton Grigg as architect. Peter A. Agelasto III with Andrew McCoy as consultant**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)**9. Major Bibliographical References****Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

U. S. Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceElk Hill  
Nelson County, VA**Previous documentation on file (NPS)**

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.  
☐ previously listed in the National Register  
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register  
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark  
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary Location of Additional Data**

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office – VDHR Property Survey Form Intensive Level, VDHR File # 062-0005  
☒ State agency - LVA, WPA of Virginia Historical Inventory, June 25, 1937, Annie L. Harrower, Shipman, VA  
☒ Federal agency – National Archives, photos  
☐ Local government  
☐ University  
☒ Other – Nelson County Historical Society, articles

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data****Acres of Property** 138.67 acres**UTM References** (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

1 17 684005 4194329 2 17 684600 4194341 3 17 684008 41935154 17 683071 4193959 5 17 683773 4194308 \_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.**11. Form Prepared By**Name/title: Peter A. Agelasto III and Betsy Rawls Agelasto; DHR Staff: Chris NovelliOrganization: \_\_\_\_\_ date September 2006Street & number: 815 Cavalier Drive telephone 757 428 8746City or town Virginia Beach state VA zip code 23451

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets****Maps** A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map of dwelling site and out buildings

**Photographs** Representative black and white photographs of the property.**Additional items** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Peter A. Agelasto III and Betsy Rawls Agelastostreet & number 815 Cavalier Drive telephone 757 428 8746city or town Virginia Beach state VA zip code 23451

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**7. SUMMARY DESCRIPTION:**

ELK HILL, located at 511 Rockfish Valley Highway near Nellysford, Virginia, is one of the earliest extant farms in Nelson County. The 173-acre rural farm, of which approximately 139 acres are included in the nomination, is characterized by its beautiful fields and bottom land, with the South Fork of the Rockfish River and Reid's Creek defining its northern, western, and eastern boundaries. Surrounded by the Blue Ridge Mountains and the Ragged Mountains, the farm still retains its historic rural character. Part of the southern boundary is marked by a stone retaining wall which runs along a 1770s property line. Route 151 divided the property when the road was built in 1936. The nominated 139 acres consist mainly of pasture land with about 45 acres in forest. The main house sits atop a bluff in the center of the farm and faces south, overlooking bottom lands. The rear of the house faces north towards Devil's Knob, Black Rock Mountain, and Three Ridge Mountain. It also overlooks the bottom land and the Rockfish River. Architecturally, the house is a substantial two-story, three-bay wide frame dwelling with a central hall plan. The original portion was built between 1790 and 1810; however, the current appearance is the result of a series of 19<sup>th</sup>-century additions and a major remodeling in 1902 in the Neoclassical style. The house and contributing outbuildings are in excellent condition. The property is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion C for its importance to Nelson County's architectural history, and Criterion A for agriculture.

NOTE: There are two other historic ELK HILL named properties in Virginia: Elk Hill Farm, Goochland County, Virginia and ELK HILL, Bedford County, Virginia.

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**DETAILED DESCRIPTION**

**EXTERIOR DESCRIPTION**

The ELK HILL house is a two-story, 3-bay wide dwelling featuring wood frame construction with weatherboard siding. An imposing classical entrance portico with paired, two-story columns dominates the façade. The columns are fluted and display Scamozzi-Ionic capitals. These support an entablature and a steeply-pitched pediment with stucco facing and a Palladian window. The portico floor is clad with Nelson County soapstone and is accessed by concrete steps flanked by curved walls with concrete ball finials. Balustraded terraces extend across the front of the house on either side of the portico. The entrance is marked by a single-leaf wood door with twelve panes over a raised panel. The entrance is further secured by a matching twelve-pane wood storm door. The doorway is framed by an elliptical fanlight transom and four-light sidelights above rectangular wood panels. The balcony above the entrance is supported by curved wood brackets and is adorned with a spindled balustrade. A double-leaf door opens onto the balcony from the second floor. Most of the windows on the house are four-over-one, double-hung sash. Two 19<sup>th</sup>-century exterior-end brick chimneys abut the lateral ends of the original block of the house. These chimneys have been stuccoed and scored to simulate the look of coursed masonry. The upper part of the house is encircled by a classical cornice with block modillions and dentiled molding. The house is covered by a hipped roof with standing-seam tin cladding.

**ARCHITECTURAL DEVELOPMENT**

The main house at ELK HILL evolved from the original house which was built between 1790 and 1810. This date range was determined by architectural historians from Colonial Williamsburg who studied the English basement and the nearby 18<sup>th</sup>-century tobacco press barn. Representatives from the Virginia Department of Historic Resources also investigated the house and English basement in 1992. None of the Coleman descendants alive today know the exact appearance of the original house. It was probably a one-story dwelling in the Early Classical Revival style with exterior-end chimneys and an asymmetrical hall-parlor plan. The house rested upon a full English basement which rose three or four feet above grade. This basement served as the original dining room and still survives under the northeast parlor. The foundation was built of brick and river sand mortar. An existing fireplace foundation provides evidence of a basement cooking hearth.

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After 1825, the house underwent a series of expansions and remodelings done primarily in the Greek Revival style. It was during this period that the house acquired an L-shape plan, with a one-room addition behind the original part of the house (the northeast parlor). Measuring 23 x 17 feet, this was probably the first addition to the house and now comprises the dining room and pantry. An early chimney foundation exists in the basement for a chimney that served the added room but has since been removed. Next, the front elevation was expanded with the addition of a southwest parlor and a second story. If one accepts the premise that fewer courses between headers indicates an earlier construction date, then the dining room addition predates the second parlor and its basement. This is supported by the brickwork in the second parlor basement. A two-level porch was also added to the front of the house during this time. Believed to have been built in the 1820s, the porch was similar to the one at Winter Green. It featured squared post supports and a shallow-pitched, hipped roof. It rose the full height of the house but did not extend the full width of the façade. Finally, the plan achieved a U shape with the construction of a bedroom addition behind the second (southwest) parlor. A stair between the dining room and bedroom rear additions provided outside access to the basement. The roofline featured various hipped and gabled sections corresponding to different additions of the house. In keeping with the Greek Revival style, the house featured a plain cornice.

The house largely assumed its present appearance in 1902 when owner Arthur T. Ewing remodeled and enlarged it in the Neoclassical style. The grand entrance portico was added at this time, giving the house a stately image and making it a landmark in Nelson County. Other stylistic embellishments included the spindled balustrades on the terrace and second-floor balcony. Additions included new back porches (which are now enclosed), a new kitchen wing, and new stairs to access the upper porch. Additionally, most of the windows were replaced with the existing four-over-one double-hung sash. A set of three grouped windows were added on the northeast elevation to provide light for the dining room. Two interior chimneys were added, and another chimney in the downstairs bedroom was extended. On the upper part of the house, a new hipped roof was built which unified all of the previous additions under a single enclosure. The roof still features the original 1902 tin. Furthermore, two hipped-roof dormers with modillioned cornices were added on the side elevations, and the 19<sup>th</sup>-century boxed cornice was embellished with block modillions and dentiled molding. The house was heated by wood until 1955.

In 1955, the owners commissioned Charlottesville architect Milton Grigg to update and enlarge ELK HILL. In addition to adding 3½ baths, Grigg added a one-story master bedroom wing off the southwest corner, designed in a modern style with double-hung or louvered 1950s-style windows.

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These were replaced in 2002 with new windows which more closely matched the historic windows on the rest of the house. The exterior trim, fascia, and soffits for the master bedroom addition are narrow, sanitized and functional. The 1902 first-floor back porch was enclosed and incorporated into the addition, becoming an interior hallway to the kitchen. The weatherboard siding, earlier exterior windows and doors, and bead board ceiling are still part of this interior hall. There are small entrance porches to this hallway and to the master bedroom. A laundry room and a small enclosed back porch are on the back of the house, and a small exterior bath is beside the back door.

Today under the Agelasto ownership, the house reflects the modern conveniences available including satellite hook up, DSL, multi zoned air conditioning and heating, state of the art appliances, and five and 1/2 baths. The interior and exterior of the house, however, remain basically unchanged from the Milton Grigg renovation in 1955.

**INTERIOR DESCRIPTION**

**BASEMENT:**

The original house had an English basement with an exterior entrance. The original bulkhead cellar entry is still visible under what is now the rear section of the center passage. Also visible are the walnut entrance door with rope latch and the three-pane transom above. The basement still retains the brick surround and hearth for a large fireplace for cooking as well as the remains of a wooden device for servants to fan flies from the food on the table when the basement housed a dining room.

Today, an interior stair leads to the basement. The room to the left of the stairs is part of the original English basement. It features brick walls laid in 4-course American bond, with four rows between headers. The brick was plastered and then scored to simulate the look of large stones. There are three basement windows which open from left to right. During a restoration of the ceiling in 2000, a large beam comprising a floor joist for the first floor was exposed. Part of the original brick floor is visible; the rest has been covered with concrete. Two historic basement doors also survive, each with an antique lock and key. According to a Colonial Williamsburg locksmith who repaired them in 2005, the door hardware dates to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The room to the right of the steps also has three windows. In 2005, the center part of the basement between the two front rooms was converted into a climate-controlled wine cellar.

Behind (northwest of) the original English basement is the basement of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century dining room addition, the first addition to the house. This space has irregular bond brick walls laid in five- and

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six-course American bond. Most of the bricks have been covered with plaster. This part of the



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basement also contains the base for a chimney (removed in 1902), which serviced the above dining room as well as concrete steps leading through a large hatch door to the outside, added in 1955.

**FIRST FLOOR:**

The interior of ELK HILL reflects the many remodelings and additions which occurred during the many years of ownership by six generations of the Coleman family. The house features a central-hall plan and is three rooms deep. Two similar sized parlors occupy the front of the house; the dining room and a bedroom occupy the middle; and a kitchen and master bedroom occupy the back.

The two parlors and dining room comprise the public rooms of ELK HILL. Each displays a simple chair

rail but no crown molding. All three public rooms have 2 3/8-inch modern-cut oak flooring laid over

the original flooring. The doors in the two parlors, dining room, and hall public space are one-panel over one-panel doors instead of the four-panel over four-panel doors used in other areas of the house. Above each door is a fixed transom which would provide extra light in the rooms off the hall.

Extending the full depth of the house, the hall is dominated by a straight-flight open-string staircase. The stair features oak treads, eight-inch risers, a spindled balustrade, a solid one-piece hand-carved handrail, and a square paneled newel post with a four-sided domical newel cap. The carriage stringer is articulated by simply designed recessed vertical panels. Small wooden acorn drops, or pendants, adorn the upper portion of the stair. The front entrance is marked by a twelve-pane wood door below an elliptical fanlight transom. A plinth block starts the door casing around the other hall doors and

bullet trim separates the architrave from the door trim. A beaded cornice tops the architrave. The hall is encircled by a chair rail and 7 1/2-inch baseboards with beaded caps.

The northeast parlor (to the right of the central hall) is the oldest part of the house. It displays a plainly detailed 1902 mantel with squared pilasters supporting a squared shelf. The southwest parlor (left of the hall) has a Colonial Revival-style mantel with a raised panel overmantel added in 1955.

The dining room is entered from the northeast parlor through a double-wide opening with sliding pocket doors. The mantel displays plain, square columns which extend the full height of the overmantel and support a plain shelf at the top. Consoles, or brackets, support the mantel shelf, and a large mirror adorns the overmantel. Three grouped windows on the east wall provide natural light. Originally there was no opening from the hall to the dining room, but the Milton Gregg renovation in 1955 created a small passage for better circulation. The entrance to the basement steps was also moved forward at this time.

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The butler's pantry is located between the dining room and kitchen, and was created by inserting a partition wall in the back part of the original dining room space. Family lore suggests that the dining room once served as a tavern room with an outside entrance. The west wall of the former dining room, now the west wall of the butler's pantry, was an exterior wall before the addition of the kitchen. The butler's pantry features an interior window that originally opened to the back porch.

Across the hall from the dining room is a bedroom added during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It has two small closets on either side of a rock/brick chimney with a wood stove which has a small shelf above it. The chimney is partially rock lined, indicating a 19<sup>th</sup>-century date. The bedroom opens to the southwest parlor and to the back hall. The room features picture molding, but no chair rail or crown molding, suggesting that this was not a public room. The flooring is rough-planed hickory with cut nails and grouting between the boards.

The front hall is separated from the back hall by two pilasters and a wood archway. This arch is free of ornament except for an exaggerated applied keystone. The back hall opens onto part of the 1902 back porches which were later enclosed. Renovations done in 2002 used this area and the 1902 pantry to create a new larger kitchen. A utility room added in 1955 and a back porch with an exterior entrance are located off the kitchen. There is an exterior half bath beside this porch.

An entrance with a side porch is on the southwest side of the house. A window transom above the door can be opened for circulation. The glass-paned entrance door opens to an interior space that had once been the outside porch. The walls are weatherboard and the window from the downstairs bedroom opens onto this interior hall. A second door enters into a small side hall which opens into the downstairs bedroom, the kitchen area, a bath, and the master bedroom added in 1955.

As mentioned above, the master bedroom was added as part of the 1955 remodeling and expansion, and was designed in a 1950s modern style. The master bedroom has a private bath (remodeled in 2002), a large cedar-lined walk-in closet, and a private entrance with a small porch. The other door on the southwest porch opens to a stair to the second-floor enclosed porches.

The kitchen was built in 1902 and remodeled in 2002. The renovations include linoleum flooring, custom cabinetry, black soapstone counters and modern appliances all designed to reflect a kitchen of the 1902 period. The doors and most of the bead board are original to the 1902 construction. The doors from the back hall and the side hall have glass transoms. The windows of the 2002 renovation were designed to match the windows of the rest of the house. A window seat is in the northeast corner window. During the 2002 renovation, a header above the former pantry door was revealed.

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It was inscribed "A T Ewing, Afton, VA Feb '02" (i.e. 1902).

**SECOND FLOOR:**

The second floor features a double-pile, central hall plan with four bedrooms. The southern end of the hall opens to the balcony above the front entrance and the northern end of the hall opens to the enclosed back porches. All four bedrooms have two exterior windows, picture molding, and four-panel doors. Three rooms have mantels, and one room has a shelf above a woodstove opening. All had woodstoves prior to 1955. The eastern front bedroom is the only bedroom with a wood stove remaining. The two bedrooms on the west have small closets, and the two bedrooms on the east have no closets. Additionally, the two front bedrooms have wide-plank chestnut floors; the back two bedrooms have heart pine floors. The upstairs hall floors are a mix of southern pine, chestnut, and heart pine. In 1902, a bath was added to the back of the house. It features plaster walls, scored to resemble tile, and a tub which is reputed to be the first with running water in Nelson County.

The porch at the back of the second floor was added in 1902 and followed the L-shaped contour of the back of the house at that time. This porch was later enclosed in 1955. It can be reached by the second-floor hall or by the steps from the first-floor west entrance door. A narrow band of two-over-two windows marks part of the now-enclosed porch. One of these windows has a latch so that it could be opened to shake a mop. Accessed from the upstairs porch, a fifth upstairs room at the back of the house could have been a bedroom. It was remodeled in 1955 as a kitchen for an apartment

used by Dorothy Ewing, a maiden sister of Marion Ewing Kyle. The sink and cabinets still remain. A large pantry for this room has been converted to a third upstairs bath and has the only shower on this floor.

**ATTIC:**

The door to the attic stair is located beside the second-floor doorway to the front balcony. The large full-height attic extends over the four-room plan of the second floor. It features unfinished wide plank flooring, unfinished walls, and an unfinished ceiling with rough-cut chestnut joists. Light is provided by the Palladian window on the entrance portico as well as the three-window dormers on the east and the west sides of the attic. The sub-roof purlins are visible beneath the tin roof. The opening for the attic steps is covered by a wood panel hatch that must be moved to the side before one can enter the attic space.

In spite of later changes, ELK HILL retains a high degree of architectural integrity. It conveys

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the evolution of a single family dwelling through the period of significance, c. 1749 to 1956.

OUTBUILDINGS:

Smoke House, last quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, contributing

Located next to the main house, the smoke house was recognized by architectural historians from Colonial Williamsburg as the earliest building on the property, dating to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. One story in height and one bay wide, the smoke house is covered by a side-gable roof. It features V-notch log construction with unsquared logs and small strips of wood for chinking. The short entrance door is made from four wide vertical boards and still has the openings for a key. On the interior, the brick floor is intact. Still remaining is the salt trough, carved from one large log, and a solid wood butcher block. The butcher block is 10½ feet long, 2 feet wide and 3 inches thick. The rafters used for smoking meat are still in place. The building was recently reclad with cedar weatherboard siding, and the roof was resingled with cedar shakes.

Tobacco Barn, circa 1790-1810, contributing

The tobacco barn was identified by Colonial Williamsburg architectural historians as one of the earliest buildings on the property, dating to between 1790 and 1810. It features a high brick foundation laid in five-course American bond, which is different from the original English basement of the main house. The foundation contains a wood door and a window opening with a wood shutter to keep farm animals penned inside. The barn features timber-frame construction with pegged mortise and tenon joints, L-shaped corner posts, studs, and down braces. Exterior steps lead to the double-door entrance. The interior is divided into two rooms. The front room houses a tobacco press used to press tobacco into wooden hogsheads. An imposing structure, the press is constructed of large hand-hewn chestnut timbers. The existing metal screw replaced the original screw which would have been wooden. The hogshead would have been placed on the round base which still remains below the screw. There are large puddles of dried tobacco juice on the floor surrounding the press. The other room was used to sort the tobacco. The wainscot paneled walls show evidence of being whitewashed as does the interior of the entire building. The interior would have been whitewashed to kill germs. Mr. Agelasto added the stained-glass windows which are attributed to the Tiffany Studios and were bought from a house in Virginia Beach. The tobacco barn has a front-gable roof with cedar shakes. The present board- and-batten sheathing was added in the 1990s.

Chicken House, 19<sup>th</sup> century, contributing

The chicken house features weatherboard siding and a shed roof. It was used into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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Two seat Outhouse, 19<sup>th</sup> century, contributing

Situated next to the chicken house is a two seat outhouse used by the family before interior plumbing was added. The outhouse was originally located cantilevered over the hillside nearby.

Double Crib Barn, 19<sup>th</sup> century, contributing

The double-crib log barn was built with hand-hewn logs with V-notches. The fact that the barn was built with hand hewn timbers at a time when, according to Nelson County personal property records, Hawes Coleman owned over 20 slaves suggests that it was built by slave labor. The foundation is made only of scattered individual large rocks. The barn is covered by a gabled roof with asphalt shingle cladding, vents in the peaks of the gables, and a cupola with a weather vane. The middle of the barn is constructed in the southern dog-trot style with a central pass-through space between two cribs. There is some remaining vertical board siding on these cribs. The cribs have both a first-floor and a second-floor opening. Dropped-roof porch extensions on either side of the main part of the structure protect farm equipment. The eastern porch extension is supported by a colonnade of unsquared log posts with the bark still intact. The size of the barn suggests it was used to store hay and farm equipment. Remains of apple packing equipment are stored here.

Garage, 1902, contributing

The garage near the highway was built in 1902 for the first Ewing automobile. It features wood-frame construction with weatherboard siding. The double-leaf, vertical-board garage doors are latched at the center. The building is covered by a front-gable roof with standing-seam metal cladding. The floor is dirt.

Two car Garage, 1955, contributing

A two-car frame and weatherboard garage designed by Milton Gregg was built in 1955 when it was necessary to have a garage near the house. It has a pyramidal tin roof and a dirt floor.

Stone Boundary/Retaining Wall, last quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, contributing structure

This early rock boundary wall runs along the 1774 boundary between land owned by Alexander Reid and his son Samuel Reid, and the land owned by Alexander's first cousin, Andrew Reid.

Pile of Stone and Brick, circa 18<sup>th</sup> century, contributing site

There is a pile of chimney stones and bricks located behind the main house 50 feet to the north. It is the ruins of an 18<sup>th</sup>-century dwelling, possibly built by Andrew Reid, who purchased 500 acres in 1749 adjoining his first cousin Alexander Reid's 700 acres. It was still standing in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and was occupied by the house servants.

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Ice House/Well House Site, 19<sup>th</sup>-century, contributing site  
This is located northeast of the main house and was demolished in the 1950s.

Shed Foundation, 19<sup>th</sup>-century, contributing site  
Just north of the main house, this shed was used for storing Delco batteries for lighting but was demolished in the 1990s.

Office, 1860s, location unknown  
There was also an outbuilding next to the main house which was used by Dr. Hawes Nicholas Coleman in the 1860s for his medical office. This has since been demolished and the location is currently unknown so it is not included in the inventory count.

NONCONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS ACROSS ROUTE 151 at 668 Rockfish Valley Highway are located on a 45.44 acre parcel of ELK HILL and are part of the original 136 acres which was purchased in 2005 by the current owner. This land was used for raising cattle throughout the ownership of Arthur T. Ewing, Jr. and two subsequent owners.

Farm House, mid-1950s, noncontributing  
This one-story farm house was built by Arthur T. Ewing, Jr., a Coleman family member. Today the house is rental property.

Barn, mid-1980s, noncontributing  
This barn was built by Uel Gardener and used for his cattle operation. Today it supports the farm operation.

Chicken House, 20<sup>th</sup> century, noncontributing  
A large chicken house of corrugated metal and wire was used by Arthur T. Ewing. It has an interior roost and interior feeding troughs.

Cattle Feeding Shed, mid-1950s, noncontributing  
A shed built by Arthur T. Ewing, Jr. was used for cattle feeding.

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**RESOURCES NOT INCLUDED IN THE PROPOSED BOUNDARY**

The following two resources were originally part of ELK HILL but are not within the parcels now owned by the Agelasto family. They merit mention but are not included within the inventory count.

Cabin Remains, circa 18th century

The stone and brick foundation and chimney remains of a former dwelling are located in the woods west of the barn next to the upper field at ELK HILL. This is believed to be the ruin of another house which was built by Andrew Reid in the 1740s, which was occupied into the 20th century.

ELK HILL Cemetery

Of special interest is a former slave cemetery, begun in the nineteenth century, located in the woods west of the cabin remains. The cemetery was a part of the ELK HILL property until 1977, but is not currently owned by Peter A. Agelasto III and is not part of the land in this nomination. Its ownership is uncertain. This information is included because it adds an important dimension to the history of ELK HILL. Rough fieldstone markers are still visible, and mixed among these are later burial sites with small ground markers. Several African American families continue to bury their family members here. There are in excess of 100 graves located on the two-acre plus site, which can be accessed from Route 664 by the lane to the Wintergreen Winery. The cemetery sits at a convergence of this road and an eighteenth century dirt path which runs from an upper field at ELK HILL and through the woods.

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**8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

**SUMMARY STATEMENT**

ELK HILL, located at 511 Rockfish Valley Highway in Nelson County, is significant under Criterion A in the area of agriculture as an outstanding example of a working farm that has evolved and prospered for over 250 years, reflecting changing trends and practices in agriculture from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. ELK HILL is also significant under Criterion C in the area of architecture for its importance to Nelson County's architectural history. The house is an excellent example of the Neoclassical style in Nelson County, and the property contains some of the earliest outbuildings in the county, dating from the late-18<sup>th</sup> and early-19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The period of significance for ELK HILL is from 1749 to 1956.

**HISTORICAL SUMMARY**

One of the earliest farms in the Rockfish Valley of Virginia, ELK HILL has served continuously as a farm for over 250 years, witnessing the rise and decline of both tobacco and apple farming in Nelson County as well as more recent experiments with grape growing. ELK HILL was first settled by Alexander Reid and his son, Samuel Reid, in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. The first crops grown by the Reids are unknown. In 1805, Hawes Coleman, the first of a long line of Coleman owners, bought the property, cultivated tobacco, and built the tobacco packing barn which still retains its original tobacco packing press. The main house was originally built between 1790 and 1810. ELK HILL prospered as a successful tobacco farm, and five generations of the Coleman family expanded and updated the house to meet current needs and architectural fashions. During the early- to mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the house was enlarged and remodeled in the Greek Revival style.

As tobacco production began to decline, Nelson County became known for its apples. The apple industry was particularly significant in Virginia in the 1880s and helped to generate prosperity in the Rockfish Valley following the Civil War. Owner Dr. Hawes Nicholas Coleman planted 10,000 Albemarle Pippin trees. Later owner Arthur T. Ewing continued their cultivation, shipping apples outside the state and abroad. (Arthur Ewing married Nannie Coleman in 1896.) The house largely assumed its present appearance in 1902 when Ewing enlarged and remodeled it in the Neoclassical style. After apple production at ELK HILL began to decline in the 1950s, owners Edwin and Marion Kyle removed the apple trees, raised cattle, and grew hay.

ELK HILL left the Coleman family's ownership when it was bought by current owner Peter Agelasto in 1978. Even though ELK HILL was owned continuously by the Colemans for five generations,



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little of its history was recorded or passed from one generation to the next. In the 1980s, Peter Agelasto started a vineyard and successfully bottled and sold wine under the ELK HILL label for over fifteen years. In 2005, Agelasto bought the neighboring property which had been originally a part of the ELK HILL land and had been portioned in 1955. This parcel had been allocated to Arthur T. Ewing, Jr., who continued to farm the land as did two subsequent owners. Also in 2005, Mr. Agelasto put the ELK HILL land in conservation easement with The Virginia Outdoors Foundation which will protect its natural habitats and rural character in the future. Today, a portion of ELK HILL is under the operation of Rockfish Valley Farm LLC and is being developed by Peter Agelasto as a model farm. ELK HILL is still an active farm.

**ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE**

Architecturally, ELK HILL is significant under Criterion C for both its house and outbuildings. The main house is an excellent example of the Neoclassical style in Nelson County. It evolved from a late-18th century structure through additions and renovations in the Early Classical Revival, Greek Revival, and Neoclassical styles. Architectural historians from Colonial Williamsburg consider the late-18<sup>th</sup>-century smokehouse and the early-19<sup>th</sup> tobacco packing barn to be among the earliest agricultural outbuildings in Nelson County. During the 19<sup>th</sup> and early-20<sup>th</sup> centuries, successive generations of the Coleman family made significant alterations and additions to the house, reflecting changing tastes and architectural fashions as well as the rising prosperity of the ELK HILL farm.

ELK HILL was one of seven houses, located within a mile of each other, that were built near the present community of Nellysford between the late-18<sup>th</sup> and early-19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Still standing today are River Bluff (c. 1779), Winter Green (c. 1789), Glen Thorn (c. 1800), and High View, now called Mill Hill (c. 1834). Valleymont (c. 1850) and Glen Mary (c. 1840) have been lost to demolition or neglect. All of these estates were working farms. Glen Thorn and ELK HILL are the only ones that currently operate as farms. The Wintergreen Vineyard and Winery are on land which was a part of the original High View property.

The main house at ELK HILL evolved from the original one-story, hall-parlor dwelling which was built between 1790 and 1810. The property was owned by Samuel Reid until 1805 when Hawes Coleman I purchased it. It is unclear whether Hawes Coleman I or a Samuel Reid family member built the original house. After 1825, the house underwent a series of expansions and remodelings done primarily in the Greek Revival style. This reflected the spread and popularization of the Greek Revival in rural areas during the second quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as well as the economic success of ELK HILL during the antebellum period. Although the designer of these alterations is unknown,

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many features such as the two-level front porch, resembled those at Winter Green – a nearby house also owned by the Coleman family, where Hawes Coleman I and John Jay Coleman resided.

In 1902, owner Arthur T. Ewing significantly expanded and remodeled the house in the fashionable Neoclassical style. Characterized by monumental columned entrance porticos, cornices, and other classical features, the Neoclassical style falls under the broader heading of the Colonial Revival, which became nationally popular in the late-19<sup>th</sup> century. Fueled by a new interest in America's colonial past as well as a national revival of interest in classicism, the Colonial Revival style drew from the preceding classically-derived Georgian, Federal, and Greek Revival styles of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

During the 1950s, the next generation of Colemans, Marion and Eddie Kyle, moved into ELK HILL. In 1955, the Kyles hired architect Milton Grigg to enlarge and remodel the house. Grigg added a large master bedroom addition, enclosed the back porches, and converted the back part of the second floor into an apartment for Mrs. Kyle's sister. During this period, another sibling, Arthur Ewing Jr., married and built the farm house across the road. Today, under the Agelasto ownership, the interior and exterior of the house remain basically unchanged from the 1955 Grigg renovation.

The surviving outbuildings reflect the evolution of farming at ELK HILL as well as regional agricultural trends in Nelson County. The late-18<sup>th</sup>-century smoke house indicates that this was a working farm where hogs were raised and meat was smoked. The tobacco press machinery in the early-19<sup>th</sup> century tobacco barn demonstrates that tobacco was both grown and packed into hogsheads. Likewise, the remains of apple sorting machinery in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century double-crib barn indicate that apples were not only grown, but also sorted and packed. While the vineyard was operating during in the 1990's, the barn and packing shed were used for storing equipment. A barn, chicken house, and sheds on the property across the highway reflect the use of that land for raising cattle.

Many of the outbuildings near the house which no longer exist, or are ruinous, were originally a part of a working farm before modern conveniences made them unnecessary. The ice/well house, the building to store Delco batteries, the home doctor's office are examples. Other buildings used for house servants or field slaves are no longer standing. Lastly, the car garage built in 1902 shows the prosperity of the family at that time; the two car garage near the house was added later.

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**HISTORICAL LAND OWNERSHIP**

The first white settlers in Nelson County were part of the migration of the Germans and Scotch-Irish down the Great Wagon Road from Pennsylvania in the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup> King George II issued a patent to Col. John Chiswell, a speculator, containing 2,460 acres on March 26, 1739. Chiswell defaulted and the patent was reissued to William Morrison for 72 pounds on July 20, 1748. This patent includes all the land at ELK HILL which has been continuously farmed by the Reid, Coleman, Ewing, and Agelasto families. The original 136 acres grew to a peak of over 12,000 acres in the 1860s. In 1955, the property was divided after the death of Arthur T. Ewing. Today the Peter Agelasto family owns 173 acres of the original Chiswell patent.

Around 1740, Alexander Reid (circa 1717 - March 21, 1804), a Scotch-Irishman, moved from Lancaster County Pennsylvania to Goochland County (present day Nelson County) where he purchased 700 acres from William Morrison on May 8, 1749.<sup>2</sup> His first cousin Andrew Reid came with him from Pennsylvania and bought 500 acres adjoining Alexander Reid. His brother John Reid was already in the Rockfish Valley. The remains of the structure in the ELK HILL woods today are probably those of a small dwelling built by Andrew Reid since it is on land that he owned. This land is outside the original Samuel Reid land but was purchased by Peter Agelasto in 1981.

Alexander Reid sold to his son Samuel Reid (June 27, 1754 - November 25, 1835) 136 acres on September 30, 1774 for 30 pounds.<sup>3</sup> The land was bordered on three sides by what is now called Reid's Creek and the South Fork of the Rockfish River. The southern boundary of 1770s remains identifiable today with portions of a rock wall. It is believed that Samuel Reid lived on land of his father-in-law in Albemarle County for a while after he married. However, he later moved to the 136 acres to be close to his father and to take care of the family lands. After the death of his mother and later his father, Samuel Reid settled his father's estate, sold his own land and moved to Kentucky in 1805. The rock pile remains of a structure behind the present ELK HILL residence probably dates to

Samuel Reid's ownership as does the smokehouse which architectural historians from Colonial Williamsburg dated as circa 1790-1810. Reid may also have operated a mill, given a reference in 1850 to John Jay Coleman's ownership of a "Reid" Corn Mill. However, Reid's ownership of a mill has not been documented and the location of a mill has not been identified.

Samuel Reid sold his 139 acres<sup>4</sup> to Hawes Coleman I on September 16, 1805 for 1500 pounds.<sup>5</sup> This was not Hawes Coleman's first purchase of land in Nelson County, then Amherst County. He bought 420 acres from Thomas Morrison and his mother Rachel Morrison Ayers (widow of William Morrison) on April 7, 1789 for 800 pounds. Hawes Coleman built a residence where Winter Green

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is located. He then purchased 210 acres from Joseph Morrison and his mother Rachel Morrison Ayers in January 5, 1791 for 300 pounds. Later he purchased the 139 acres adjoining on the southwest from Samuel Reid as mentioned above. This includes the land where the Elk Hill residence sits. On the same date he purchased 25 acres known as the Meadow Tract for 1500 pounds from Samuel Reid. There is no certain information where this parcel was located. With other purchases he held almost 1500 acres by 1805. The fact that Alexander Reid sold the land to Samuel Reid for 30 pounds and that thirty-one years later Hawes Coleman I bought it for 1500 pounds suggests the Reids had cleared the land and made improvements on it. Hawes Coleman was already a prominent tobacco grower as the amount of acreage and the number of slaves he owned indicates. He most likely was already growing tobacco on other land that he owned and probably bought the Elk Hill land to expand his tobacco production and because it has some of the finest bottom land in the Rockfish Valley. It was probably Hawes Coleman I who built the tobacco barn shortly after he bought the property. Architectural historians at Colonial Williamsburg have dated the tobacco barn to between 1790 and 1810. Hawes Coleman I may have also been the builder of the original ELK HILL dwelling since the English basement also dates from this time according to the Colonial Williamsburg historians.

Hawes Coleman I conveyed the 139 acres to his son John Jay Coleman (April 11, 1797 -1869) by deed dated August 3, 1814 when John Jay was only seventeen. This deed was not recorded until February 27, 1815. At the same time Hawes I deeded his oldest son, William, a 210-acre parcel. Five years later on January 17, 1819 John Jay Coleman married Catherine Walker Hawes. John Jay Coleman could have brought his wife to ELK HILL to live in the existing house. They had nine children, four of which were born while they lived in the Rockfish Valley. According to family stories they moved to Kentucky in 1826 and stayed there until 1834. He may have slowed down his tobacco production at ELK HILL when the market collapsed. In the 1827 property tax book, John Jay Coleman owned eleven slaves, probably not enough to maintain a large tobacco operation. It is not known why John Jay moved to Kentucky although family stories have it that he and his wife were helping to take care of her family property in Kentucky.

On April 18, 1828, John Jay Coleman sold the 139 acres to his brother Dr. Hawes Netherland Coleman for \$5000. At some point, Hawes Netherland Coleman (August 22, 1788-1867) operated a plantation known as Vallemont which adjoined Winter Green to the north. The land books reflect that John Jay, in 1829, owned the 210 acres previously owned by his brother William with \$600 of improvements "which adjoins Hawes," 180 acres, 67.5 acres, 139.5 acres (included in the present day ELK HILL land), and 71.25 acres. The deed for the 139 acres was not recorded until November

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1, 1829.<sup>6</sup> The most likely explanation for the transferring of the property is that John Jay and Hawes Netherland had an agreement. John Jay may have been traveling back and forth between Kentucky. Hawes Netherland Coleman who was forty years old in 1828 might have used the tobacco packing shed for the family operation and might have needed the house as well. No information survives.

The land records for 1838 show 139.5 acres owned by Hawes Netherland Coleman with buildings of \$500 added in that year. This may identify the year of one of the additions to the house. John Jay Coleman and Hawes Netherland Coleman both must have made additions to the house and/or built outbuildings such as the crib barn probably built by slave labor as both owned slaves. Either John Jay or Hawes Netherland Coleman made the first addition to the original house. Today, this comprises the dining room and pantry. Because this addition was larger than the existing house and because of the family lore that the dining room had been used for a tavern, more research is needed to determine if it was a tavern. Miss Dolly Ewing wrote about ELK HILL and stated that the original house was built by Dr. Hawes N. Coleman in 1825. Perhaps Dr. Coleman was the builder of the second parlor and his brother John Jay Coleman built the dining room ell. Dr. Coleman probably also built the structure in the side yard for the doctor office. A corner of this is visible in an old photograph.

According to the family, John Jay Coleman returned from Kentucky in 1836. A letter exists written by him from Nelson County to his mother-in-law in Kentucky dated September 22, 1836. By will signed March 20, 1835, Hawes Coleman I left his Winter Green house, a mill, and about one half of the old tract (420 acres tract) to his son John Jay. It makes sense that John Jay came back from Kentucky to take care of his ailing father, and to prepare to take over Winter Green. After the death of his father in 1840, John Jay purchased ELK HILL back from his brother for the same amount he had sold it to him, \$5,000, on December 6, 1842.<sup>7</sup> However, he continued to live at Winter Green. Just after Hawes Coleman I died, Dr. Hawes Netherland Coleman was appointed sheriff of Nelson at age 53 on November 11, 1841. This could explain why Dr. Hawes Netherland Coleman no longer was interested in the ELK HILL operation and was ready to sell the property back to his brother.

After John Jay Coleman purchased ELK HILL back from Dr. Hawes Netherland Coleman, the tobacco and grain markets exploded and there was high demand for these crops again. It was probably at this time the wooden screw on the tobacco press was replaced with a new iron screw. According to records, tobacco in the 1850s was Elk Hill's principal crop, along with a large swine operation. The 1840 slave census revealed that John Jay Coleman owned 78 slaves. His real estate was valued at \$40,000 according to the 1850 census. Perhaps with this new wealth and status, John Jay Coleman made additions and renovations to the house.

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When his father died, John Jay Coleman had eight children ranging from two to twenty-two years of age. His son Hawes Nicholas Coleman (September 19, 1825 – July 21, 1877) was fifteen years old. Hawes Coleman later went to the University of Virginia and the University of Pennsylvania where he studied medicine and was licensed as a physician. It would probably have been Hawes Nicholas Coleman who built the doctors office beside the Elk Hill house. Hawes Nicholas Coleman married his first wife Sarah Tinsley in 1856 but she died on August 29, 1857 while giving birth to their son Jay Tinsley Coleman. That same year Hawes Nicholas Coleman bought the Rodes Tract of 406.75 acres from Goodwin.<sup>8</sup> This parcel adjoins the ELK HILL residence. Hawes Nicholas Coleman received the title to the ELK HILL house site by deed from his father John Jay, dated January 4, 1862, but it deeded only 6 acres “on which Hawes now lives.” This deed was not recorded until after the Civil War on January 22, 1866. Hawes Nicholas’s father, John Jay Coleman, left the Meadow or Reid Tract of 25 acres to his other son Samuel but apparently had, by oral agreement, divided this property to Hawes Nicholas Coleman valued at \$1,600 around 1865. Hawes Coleman also purchased the Goodwin tract of 366 acres at a public auction in October 1866.<sup>9</sup> This included the 1790 residence now known as River Bluff across the river from the ELK HILL house site.

Dr. Coleman was one of the wealthiest men of his time in Nelson County. He had 125 slaves in the 1860 census. He also owned a grist mill, but no one knows of its location today. He grew tobacco but also practiced traditional intensification which meant that he created permanent fields based around one or two less risky crops. It was Hawes Nicholas Coleman that introduced apples to ELK HILL, planting 10,000 Albemarle Pippin apple trees. Apples became very popular and Dr. Coleman was one of the biggest growers in Nelson County. Dr. Coleman married his second wife Nannie Watson in 1864, and their daughter Nannie Noble Coleman was born October 18, 1875. Dr. Coleman died on July 21, 1877, and his estate remained open until there was a public sale pursuant to a suit brought to settle the estate in July 1878. The sale was held in July 1880 and the title was confirmed to Nannie E. Watson August 8, 1882. She continued the production of apples, and records support her shipping Albemarle Pippins from ELK HILL Orchards to apple brokers in New York City. She was also still growing a little tobacco.

After Nannie Watson Coleman died in 1897, her estate remained open and was settled through a public sale. Her son-in-law Arthur T. Ewing (September 25, 1867- January 23, 1939) purchased the property on November 16, 1897.<sup>10</sup> He had married Nannie Noble Coleman (October 18, 1875 - February 21, 1922) on November 7, 1896. Arthur Ewing had moved from Dublin, Ireland to Nelson County with his father. Arthur Ewing had graduated with high honors from Trinity College and he and his father had purchased Glen Mary, a plantation about a mile from ELK HILL. It is told in the

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family that they bought the Glen Mary property sight unseen after reading an ad in the Dublin Times. Arthur Ewing was 28 when he had married Nannie Coleman. He took over and expanded the apple business. Apple production was very successful in Nelson County. Additionally, Arthur Ewing made the principal additions and alterations that the house reflects today. He also added the first car garage. However, as the years passed, the age of the apple trees, the absence of slave labor and competition took their toll on the profitability of apples at ELK HILL and in the county as well, and apple production at ELK HILL declined.

It is interesting to add that Arthur T. Ewing Sr. maintained a house in Charlottesville and used ELK HILL as a seasonal residence. He raised seven children as a single parent after his wife died and educated them at schools such as Virginia Episcopal School, Chatham Hall and the University of Virginia. His daughter, Tempe Ewing Goodloe, said there was a business in Lynchburg and the family lived there for a time also.

After the death of their father, two of Arthur Ewing's sons, Arthur and Edward, occupied houses on family land. One of Arthur's daughters, Dolly, continued to live in the main house. In 1955 there was a partition to settle Mr. Ewing's estate. Marion Ewing Kyle and her husband Edwin W. Kyle received the house and over 400 acres around it. They added the master bedroom wing, renovated the kitchen, and built the two car garage by the house. They also added the first central heat and three and one-half baths along with making extensive repairs. Mr. Kyle removed the dying apple trees and used the land to raise cattle and grow hay. Arthur Ewing, Jr. was allocated 100 acres. He built the farmhouse on the east side of the road in the 1950s and also raised cattle. The Kyles had no children and lived at ELK HILL from 1956 until Mrs. Kyle moved to a nursing home in Charlottesville in 1976. The property was sold in 1978. This ended 173 years of ownership by five generations of the Coleman family.

The current owner, Peter Alexander Agelasto III, took title to ELK HILL and 85.48 acres on May 1, 1978.<sup>11</sup> He added an adjoining 26.564 acres by deed dated April 20, 1981, which was land originally owned by Andrew Reid.<sup>12</sup> The 85.48 acres and the 26.564 acres are taxed together.<sup>13</sup> He next added 7.761 acres along the Rockfish River at the Rt. 151 bridge by deed dated December 28<sup>th</sup>, 2001.<sup>14</sup> Later he acquired 45.44 acres by deed dated March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2005.<sup>15</sup> (It appears that the original 85.48 acres together with the 7.761 acres and the 45.44 acres, which total 138.68 acres, is the land purchased by Samuel Reid from his father in 1774. Peter Agelasto also acquired two small parcels containing 1.17 acres and 2.17 acres between Reid's Creek and State Route 627 which is Glenthorne Loop. This may have been part of the Reid Meadow Tract. These parcels are not included in the nomination as they are outside the original 136 (139) acres.)<sup>16</sup> Another parcel of 4.5 acres acquired

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in 2000 is also not included as it is owned by Peter Alexander Agelasto III and his sons and was part of the Andrew Reid property.

Mr. Agelasto planted a vineyard in 1982 and raised grapes until the vineyard was discontinued in 1998. However, hay production continued. A portion of ELK HILL is currently under the operation of Rockfish Valley Farm LLC and is being developed as a model farm to include chickens, cattle and sheep, vegetables and horticultural plantings. A conservation easement with Virginia Outdoor Foundation and riparian buffer agreements in place under the CREP program will ensure ELK HILL farm's future role in the rural landscape of Virginia. Public trails around the perimeters are also under the auspices of The Rockfish Valley Foundation.

#### AGRICULTURAL HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

ELK HILL is significant under Criterion A in the area of agriculture as an outstanding example of a working farm that has evolved and prospered for over 250 years, reflecting changing trends and practices in agriculture from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

As the Scotch-Irish migrated from Pennsylvania into the Rockfish Valley of Virginia bringing with them their knowledge of growing grains, tobacco planters from the eastern part of the state were moving west to find better land. When Alexander Reid bought land from William Morrison in 1749, his plans probably were to clear the land and grow grains such as wheat, rye, oats, and corn because that was what most of the Scotch Irish were doing.

According to the 1790 U.S. census, Alexander Reid had six white people living on his land, and he owned two slaves. If Alexander Reid were growing grain, it did not require many slaves as that form of agriculture did not require labor intensive. Therefore, the two slaves were probably domestic slaves. It is noted in the 1850 industry schedules that John Jay Coleman, an owner of ELK HILL,

owned a "Reid" Corn Mill. This suggests that the mill was once a property of Alexander or Samuel Reid. However, Reid's ownership of a mill has not been documented and a mill location has not been identified. Additionally, one of the streams on the ELK HILL land has been known historically as Still House Branch. So the Reids may have been making whiskey from some of the grain. Livestock probably roamed freely on the land until livestock management was established. The Reid family was probably self-sufficient by necessity.<sup>17</sup> Although the valley was becoming populated, there were few communities as such before 1800.<sup>17</sup> Alexander Reid cleared and farmed land in the Rockfish Valley until his death in 1804. Alexander Reid's son Samuel Reid most likely continued

with subsistence farming and may have also made whiskey. Samuel Reid sold the land to Hawes



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Coleman I in 1805. Hawes Coleman I was a prominent farmer in Nelson County,<sup>17</sup> and he continued to grow grains, clear the land and expand his farm operations. Like other wealthy men of his time, Hawes Coleman I took on other ventures as he expanded his valley holdings.<sup>17</sup> He operated a grist mill and a saw mill on land situated between the Reid purchase and his Winter Green farm residence. It is noted in the 1880 industry schedules that John Jay Coleman's mill was operated beside the Rockfish River. This could possibly be the same one Hawes Coleman ran. Family tradition holds that he had the capacity to make bricks at this facility as well.

Hawes Coleman I also was a prominent tobacco grower. The Reids were not. The 1811 property tax book reveals 22 slaves on the property. In the early-19<sup>th</sup> century tobacco was the cash crop in the Rockfish Valley.<sup>17</sup> In the 1980s, an architectural historian, a photographer and a draftsman came from the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation to ELK HILL. They determined that an outbuilding known as the Packing Shed, which contains a tobacco press, was built between 1790 and 1810. They noted that the original screw on the press would have been made of wood, and the current one of iron is a replacement screw. Family stories support the existence of fancy tobacco grown in the bottomlands along the rockfish River and Reid's Creek. The tobacco was sorted and packed in the packing shed. It was not used for pipe tobacco or cigarettes, but was tobacco used for more upscale products such as cigar wrappings. The Colemans emphasized quality over quantity. Hogsheads were packed with 500 pounds of tobacco, the leaves being pressed firmly into the barrels using the "prize" or screw to pack it tightly. Wheels were added to some of the barrels so they could be rolled, and barrels without wheels were placed into wagons to be pulled by ox or horse and carried to bateaux on the Rockfish and James rivers. These barrels of tobacco were then sent by river to Richmond for sale or export. According to the 1813 property books, Hawes Coleman I had 19 horses to pull the wagons or hogsheads of tobacco to the river.

Hawes Coleman I also maintained other farming operations. In his will,<sup>18</sup> he bequeathed to his son John Jay Coleman 6 horses at \$30 each, 25 head of cattle at \$5 each, 20 hogs at \$2 each, and 12 sheep at \$1.50 each. At that time Hawes Coleman's cattle ownership was slightly below the county average (5 versus 5.705); he owned more hogs (2 versus 1.570) and more sheep (1.5 versus 1.261) than the county average.<sup>19</sup> During this time, people began to improve their livestock, especially hogs, because the tobacco and grain markets were starting to collapse by the 1830s. This lasted until the late 1840s.<sup>17</sup>

John Jay Coleman continued to grow tobacco and to raise livestock at ELK HILL. Livestock included cattle, sheep, horses, and hogs. He probably slowed down tobacco production as the market collapsed. As shown in the 1827 property tax book, John Jay Coleman owned 11 slaves. This was

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probably not enough to maintain a large tobacco operation. In 1826 John Jay Coleman moved to Kentucky and several years later in 1828 sold his acres to his brother Hawes Netherland Coleman.

John Jay Coleman purchased the ELK HILL land back from his brother Hawes Netherland Coleman in 1842. In the 1850s, tobacco was ELK HILL's principal crop, along with a large swine operation. In the 1840s the tobacco and grain markets exploded and there was high demand for these crops again.<sup>17</sup> Most likely at this time, the old wooden screw on the tobacco press was replaced with a new iron screw. The 1840 slave census revealed that John Jay Coleman owned 78 slaves and had a major farm operation underway. His real estate was valued at \$40,000 according to the 1850 census. He was fifth in real estate values after the families of the Massies (\$100,000 to \$150,000), Cabells (\$62,000 to \$150,170) Claiborne (\$40,900) and Woods (\$85,000).

According to the 1850 agricultural census, ELK HILL included 700 improved acres comprising a total farm cash value of \$16,000. The farm included 22 horses, 2 mules, 6 milch cows, 5 working oxen, 25 other cattle, and 150 swine with a total livestock value of \$1,350. The census also provides evidence that the farm was predominately a tobacco farm producing 18,500 pounds of tobacco, 1,100 bushels of wheat, 1,500 bushels of Indian corn, and 200 bushels of oats. Other agricultural products included 200 pounds of butter. Homemade manufactures were listed at \$50 value, while animal slaughtering brought \$500 to the farm.

Hawes Nicholas Coleman received title to ELK HILL in 1862 by deed from his father John Jay Coleman. In 1850, the county contained 638 farms on 109,855 improved acres. By the 1850s, ELK HILL included 700 improved acres, this being above the average size for the county (172 acres). The county was also producing 122,230 bushels of wheat, 353,432 bushels of Indian corn, and 79,556 bushels of oats. Tobacco, a large cash crop in the county, amounted to 1,433,730 pounds produced in 1850. When broken down to per farm averages, ELK HILL was producing more than average amount of wheat (1,100 bushels versus 191 bushels), Indian corn (1,500 bushels versus 553 bushels), oats (200 bushels versus 124 bushels), and tobacco (18,500 pounds versus 2,247 pounds). These numbers suggest that at this time ELK HILL was a sizeable operation. The numbers of livestock on the property were also above average with horses (22 versus 3), asses and mules (2 versus .18), milch cows (6 versus 3), working oxen (5 versus 1), other cattle (25 versus 8), and swine (150 versus 31). ELK HILL was above average in value of animals slaughtered (\$500 versus \$127) and also in the value of livestock (\$1,350 versus \$436). These figures demonstrate that ELK HILL was a large tobacco and swine plantation, but was diversified with many other crops and livestock at the time.

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The 1860 agricultural census reveals that John Jay Coleman owned 12,811 acres although some was already transferred to his sons. Jon Jay Coleman's lands had a total farm cash value of \$60,000. The farm included 20 horses, 10 mules, 12 milch cows, 12 working ox, 40 other cattle, and 225 swine with a total livestock value of \$25,500. The census also provides evidence that the farm was predominately a tobacco farm producing 37,000 pounds of tobacco, 750 bushels of wheat, 3,750 bushels of Indian corn, and 600 bushels of oats. Other agricultural products included 5 bushels of peas and beans, 15 bushels of sweet potatoes, 300 pounds of butter, 30 gallons of wine, 5 bushels of buckwheat, and 30 pounds of beeswax. Animal slaughtering brought \$1,380 to the farm.

These numbers reveal once again that ELK HILL in 1860 was one of the more prosperous farms in the county (12,811 acres versus 204) with a cash value of \$60,000 versus \$6,924. ELK HILL owned more horses (20 versus 4), more mules (10 versus 1), more milch cows (12 versus 4), more working oxen (12 versus 2), more cattle (40 versus 5), and more swine (225 versus 29). The average value of livestock was higher on the farm than the county (\$20,530 versus \$608), and the value of livestock slaughtered was also higher (\$1,380 versus \$259). Land used for agricultural production was also significantly higher than the county average in terms of tobacco (37,000 versus 4,893 pounds), wheat (750 bushels versus 135), Indian corn (3,750 versus 585 bushels), and oats (600 versus 158 bushels).

ELK HILL also produced more peas and beans (5 versus 4), butter (300 versus 170 pounds), wine (30 versus 1 gallon), buckwheat (5 versus 3 bushels), and beeswax (30 versus 1 pound). The only agricultural product that was slightly below average was sweet potatoes (15 versus 16 bushels).<sup>20</sup> The Coleman's agricultural production had significantly increased over the years. Tobacco on the farm almost doubled while swine production remained strong.

Dr. Hawes Nicholas Coleman, son of John Jay Coleman, was one of the wealthiest men in Nelson County during this time. By 1852 when he was 27 years old, the land books show that he owned 4 slaves, 100 cattle, sheep and hogs. He had 125 slaves in the 1860 census. In 1860 there were 554 slaveholders in Nelson County. Of those slaveholders only four had 100-200 slaves.<sup>21</sup> He operated a grist mill turning wheat into flour and chop at a value of \$4,800 and \$375, and corn into meal valued at \$6,500.<sup>22</sup> There were only 11 flour and meal establishments in the county. The capital invested in the Elk Hill mill was higher than average mill (\$7,000 versus \$2,590), and the annual product of flour and chop was also higher than the average mill (\$11,900 versus \$10,342).<sup>20</sup> It is recorded in the 1871 land books that the mill was destroyed by fire.

Dr. Hawes Coleman received title to ELK HILL in 1862 by deed from his father, John Jay Coleman.

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He carried forth the tobacco tradition of his family. However, he probably practiced traditional intensification. By that, he took advantage of his labor force, creating permanent fields based around  
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one or two less risky crops.<sup>17</sup> In this case, the crops were apples and tobacco. It is known from written family descriptions that Dr. Coleman planted 10,000 apple trees. The apple packing equipment is a remnant of that time. He grew Albemarle Pippins and Winesaps. After the Civil War, apple production became significant in Nelson County, and Dr. Hawes Coleman was certainly one of the biggest growers in the county.<sup>23</sup> Post-war commercial products, particularly apples, were a capital intensive operation that could only be undertaken by wealthy planters.<sup>17</sup> Dr. Coleman died in 1877. In the year of his death, it was recorded that his wife Nannie A. Watson Coleman shipped 500 barrels of choice Albemarle Pippins from the ELK HILL Orchards to R. W. Woodruff Co. apple brokers in New York City, New York. Shipments as large as that one were also made prior to that. In 1870, the value of orchard fruit in Nelson County rose from \$3,721 in 1860 to \$6,302 in a course of one year,<sup>21</sup> reflecting the wealth that apple production brought to Nelson County.

According to the 1880 agricultural census, ELK HILL (at that time owned by Dr. Colman's widow Nannie Watson Coleman) had 150 improved acres with a total farm cash value of \$2,000. The farm included 1 horse, 1 mule, 1 milch cow, 1 other cow, 16 swine, 40 poultry in the barnyard, and 2 cows sold living with a livestock value of \$100. The farm produced 100 pounds of butter and 100 eggs. Agricultural production included one acre producing a 600-pound tobacco crop, and four acres with 100 apple-bearing trees. The farm included 6 non-mowed acres, 4 acres of pasture/meadow, 106 acres of woodland, and forest products valued at \$20. These numbers reveal that after the death of Dr. Coleman, Nannie Coleman kept the farm running, although ELK HILL was not as diverse in production as in earlier years. According to the 1880 census statistics, Nannie Watson Coleman had more poultry than the county average (40 versus 11) and more eggs produced (100 versus 60 eggs). The average tobacco acreage in the county was 2 acres compared to ELK HILL's one acre, with ELK HILL producing a lower than average tobacco crop (600 versus 2,046 pounds).

Nannie Watson Coleman died in 1897, and the estate was bought by her son-in-law Arthur T. Ewing. He continued growing apples. By 1899, 38,501 barrels of apples in the county were harvested, with 80 % of the crop consumed in the county and 20% sold to outside markets.<sup>23</sup> In 1910 the value of orchards in Nelson County increased to \$213,095.<sup>21</sup> Barrels produced reached 154,655 by 1919, with 92% shipped out of the county.<sup>23</sup> However, the growing age of the trees, the absence of slave labor, and certainly competition all took their toll on the profitability of apples at ELK HILL and in the county as the years went by.

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Nannie Coleman's son Arthur T. Ewing, Jr. lived across the road on 100 acres of which the 47.44 parcel is a portion of the ELK HILL land and contained his residence. Although farm manager at ELK HILL, he started his own cattle operation even though he continued growing apples. In the **Section \_8\_ Page \_25\_**

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1950s the value of apple production increased to \$728,385 in the county.<sup>21</sup> However, the apple trees at ELK HILL were not being replanted and in the mid 1950s they were plowed up. Family members found other work to supplement farming. Farming continued at Elk Hill, but was hard. Edwin Kyle raised cattle and grew hay until he sold the property in 1978 to Peter Alexander Agelasto III. A cattle operation continued and a large quantity of hay was produced. In 1982, Peter Agelasto planted a vineyard with Chardonnay and Riesling grapes. Grapes were harvested at ELK HILL and crushed at Mountain Cove Vineyards in Lovington. Mr. Agelasto sold his bottled wine under the ELK HILL Vineyard label throughout the state. The vineyard was discontinued in 1998, but hay production has continued to the present. Although the vineyard at ELK HILL was discontinued, the current successful development of vineyards and wineries is bringing agricultural recognition back to Nelson County. Nelson County is currently seeking to preserve its rural character by promoting agriculture as both a traditional industry and a source for tourism revenue, especially with the apple and vineyard industries.

Today a portion of ELK HILL is under the operation of Rockfish Valley Farm LLC and is being developed as a model farm to include chickens, cattle, and sheep, vegetables and horticultural plantings. The Rockfish Valley Foundation, a non-profit organization, has been formed with the mission to preserve this historic land and its historic agricultural heritage and to provide public access and education in the areas of conservation, environmental stewardship and natural history on the lands beside the Rockfish River and Reids Creek.

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## **10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

### **Verbal Boundary Description**

The property at ELK HILL being nominated is identified as tax parcels #21-9-2 (45.43 acres) 21-A-35B (7.761 acres) and 21-A-37 (85.48 acres of a larger parcel totaling 112.04 acres) on the tax parcel maps for Nelson County, Virginia. The total acreage within this boundary description is 138.67 acres.

### **Boundary Justification**

The property being nominated includes the ELK HILL residence, outbuildings, agricultural fields and forest that have been historically associated with ELK HILL and maintain historic integrity. The land consists of 139 acres which is the land deeded to Hawes Coleman in 1774 by Samuel Reid.

While ELK HILL encompassed over 10,000 acres at the time of the Civil War, today the Agelasto ownership is just 173 acres. Part of that is not included in the nomination as it was not historically the land of Hawes Coleman I purchased from Samuel Reid. It does include the 1950s farm structures which are non contributing built by Arthur T. Ewing Jr. Also it is to be noted that the exact location of Reid's Creek and the South Fork of the Rockfish River have changed somewhat since 1774. Flood events such as hurricane Camille have impacted the location of these waterways.



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Note: The following information is common to all photographs.

Name: ELK HILL (VHDR File Number: #062-0005), Nelson County, Virginia

Photographer: Betsy Rawls Agelasto and Peter A. Agelasto III

Date of Photo: September 2006

Location of Negatives: Virginia Dept. of Historic Resources Archives, Richmond, VA

1. VIEW OF: Primary Elevation of Main Dwelling, looking North
2. VIEW OF: Front porch and entrance door of Main Dwelling, looking North
3. VIEW OF: Rear elevation of Main Dwelling, looking SE
4. VIEW OF: Side elevation of Main Dwelling, looking South
5. VIEW OF: Smoke House, Looking West
6. VIEW OF: 1955 Garage and main dwelling, looking NE
7. VIEW OF: Tobacco Packing Shed, looking North
8. VIEW OF: Crib barn, looking West
9. VIEW OF: 1902 garage, looking South
10. VIEW OF: Stair Hall, looking East
11. VIEW OF: Dining Room and Parlor, looking East
12. VIEW OF: Sitting Room, looking South
13. VIEW OF: 1805 English basement area, looking South
14. VIEW OF: 1805 basement showing blocked up cooking fireplace and outside entrance.
15. VIEW OF: Arthur Ewing farm house and out buildings, looking NE
16. VIEW OF: ELK HILL chicken house and outhouse, looking North
17. VIEW OF: Farm House, looking East
18. VIEW OF: Hayfield being hayed, September 24, 2006, looking East

Photos by others:

19. AERIAL VIEW OF: ELK HILL - Lee Diehl, May 2004

20. PHOTO OF: Arthur T. Ewing and Norton Pippin apple tree circa 1902 – National Archives

21. VIEW OF: ELK HILL dwelling looking West - Library of Virginia 1937 showing front before 1955 changes

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Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Rouse Jr., Parke. *The Great Wagon Road*. McGraw-Hill Book Company: New York, 1973

<sup>2</sup> Albemarle County Deed Book I pg. 43

<sup>3</sup> Amherst County Deed Book D pg. 259

<sup>4</sup> This is not a typographical error. Alexander Reid sold 136 acres to his son Samuel, and Samuel Reid sold 139 acres to Hawes Coleman I.

<sup>5</sup> Amherst County Deed Book K pg. 395

<sup>6</sup> Nelson County Deed Book page 237

<sup>7</sup> Nelson County Deed Book 10 at page 284 on April 29, 1843

<sup>8</sup> Nelson County Deed Book 15 page 569

<sup>9</sup> Nelson County Deed Book 19 page 36 on June 19, 1874

<sup>10</sup> Nelson County Deed Book 22 page 285

<sup>11</sup> Virginia National Bank, Trustee under agreement with Marion Ewing Kyle recorded in Deed Book 162 at page 123 on April 14<sup>th</sup>, 1978

<sup>12</sup> Deed Book 189 at page 153 from the Joseph F. Moore, Jr., Trust

<sup>13</sup> Tax map #21-A-37

<sup>14</sup> Horizons, LLC, recorded as Instrument #010004988. This is tax map parcel #21-A-35B.

<sup>15</sup> From Richard D. Holcomb recorded as Instrument #050001505. This is tax map parcel #21-9-2.

<sup>16</sup> From Waynesboro Nursery Inc. by deed date June 8, 2005 recorded as Instrument #050003014. These parcels are taxed together with tax map #21-A-37 and tax map #21-9-2.

<sup>17</sup> Nelson, Lynn A. *The Agroecologies of a Southern Community: The Tye River Valley of Virginia, 1730-1860*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bell & Howell Information and Learning Company, 1998

<sup>18</sup> This is the will of Hawes Coleman I of Nelson County to which he left for his children when he died in 1840. His last changes to his will were made in 1839.

<sup>19</sup> Amherst County (Va.) Will Books 1-7. Nelson County (Va.) Will Books A-H. These are found in the back of the book by Lynn A. Nelson.

<sup>20</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1860 Census statistics

<sup>21</sup> GeoStat Center: Collections. University of Virginia Library. 20 July 2006.

<<http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/>>

<sup>22</sup> Industry Schedules, 1870, Nelson County. Richmond, Virginia Viewed at the Library of Virginia; Microfilm (258)

<sup>23</sup> Historic Resources Identification and Assessment of Nelson County VA: TJPDC, 1993